

Mind Body Align



MINDFUL EDUCATION FOR
TEACHERS WORKSHOP



A WORKSHOP FOR ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF THE CLASSROOM.



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Mindful Education for Teachers Agenda

I. Welcome, Introductions

- The Butterfly House and Mind Body Align
- Agenda review - The how, what, and why of the workshop
- Group norms and agreements - Let's establish some guidelines for the workshop
- Set an intention - "Energy goes where intention flows"
- Opening meditation

II. What is Mindfulness?

- What Mindfulness Is - And Isn't
- Paying attention on purpose without judgment
 - Of our five senses
 - Of our thoughts
 - Of our emotions
- The mindful pause - Mindfulness helps us create space and replace impulsive reactions with thoughtful responses
- Formal vs. Informal - Why do we meditate?=
 - Why mindfulness?
 - How mindfulness helps us become better teachers

III. Neuroscience and Research

- The Mindful Brain
 - Role of Prefrontal Cortex
 - Amygdala
 - Hippocampus
- Impact in the classroom if these things are addressed
- Make your mindful jar
- Mindfulness and Trauma
 - Deregulating the nervous system
 - Stuck in Flight/Fight/Freeze
- Benefits for educators
 - Reduced stress and burnout
 - Greater success in doing their jobs
 - More emotionally supportive and better organized classrooms
- Benefits for students
 - Improved attention and executive function
 - Greater social and emotional skills, including emotion regulation, behavior in school, and empathy
 - Enhanced well-being, including lower test anxiety, stress, post-traumatic symptoms and depression
- Research
 - Largest to date on mindfulness in children and education



- Over 900 students K-5, over 45 teachers
- Improvements in Social, Emotional, Physical and Mental engagement
- Case Studies

IV. History of Mindfulness

- Mindfulness can be traced back thousands of years to ancient practices and traditions
- Introduced in secular applications beginning over 30 years ago through the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction)
- Now in medicine, psychology, corporate settings to address illness, pain and stress, among other things
- 30 years of research showing
 - decreased depression, anxiety, stress
 - improved sleep (reduced insomnia)
 - increased physical and mental ease & well-being, increased resonance with others
 - 40 studies/month are currently coming out on mindfulness!

V. Mindfulness in Education

- New and rapidly growing
- Benefits we are seeing:
 - Focus and concentration (necessary especially with the increasing use of technology)
 - Increased self awareness (Recognizing emotions)
 - Improved impulse control (Creating Space!)
 - Reduced Stress (Ability to calm down when upset)
 - Empathy (for self and others)
- The Marshmallow Test - The ability to control urges in the present moment leads to success in the future
- How do we bring mindfulness to our schools?
- Model of Mind Body Align's Social-Emotional Learning Program
 - 16 lesson curriculum presented schoolwide 2x/week for 15 minutes per lesson
 - Breathing, listening, seeing, movement, walking, eating, thoughts, emotions, heartfulness
 - State of Ohio and Mindfulness Education
 - 2019-2024 Strategic Plan for Education
 - PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports)
 - Project Aware Ohio: School-Based Mindfulness Interventions
- What is Social Emotional Learning?
- Integrating Mindfulness & Social Emotional Learning
- Getting teens to buy in
- A note about secularity
- Working with resistance
 - Learn to See 'Resistance' as Information
 - Handle your Internal State
 - Engage the Resistance



- Refine the Container
- Get Support
- Further Resources
- Ways of sustaining mindfulness in the classroom

VII. Resources

- Personal practice apps
- Best apps for kids and teens
- Children's Literature
- Books for teachers and parents
- Articles for teachers and parents
- Best websites for the Mindful Teacher
- Podcasts

VIII. Closing, Reflection, Questions

- How did that intention work for you?
- Closing Meditation
- Evaluations
- Questions

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What Mindfulness Is - And Isn't

Mindfulness is

- **paying attention on purpose**
Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.
- **a way of living**
Mindfulness is more than just a practice. It brings awareness and caring into everything we do—and it cuts down needless stress.
- **evidence based**
We don't have to take mindfulness on faith. Both science and experience demonstrate its positive benefits for our health, happiness, work, and relationships.
- **for everyone**
Mindfulness is not a special added thing we do. As humans, we already have the capacity to be present, and it doesn't require us to change who we are.
- **letting go of taking things for granted**
We accept the lot we've been given in life. We assume and expect things will stay the same. Mindfulness challenges us to awaken from these mind-habits and appreciate the little things.
- **returning our thoughts to the present moment**
A common misconception about mindfulness is that it means to stay in the present moment. We don't always have control over our naturally wandering mind, but we have control over the return. We can always *return* our mind to the present moment, return it to our breath or our senses which can be found in the present moment.
- **the self-regulation of attention and emotions**
The scientists used the word "self-regulation" to refer to how you can take control of your attention, you can regulate your focus. It's also about regulating your emotions. If we are more aware of the emotion that we are feeling, we can work through it thoughtfully instead of reacting to it.



Mindfulness is not

- **a religion**
The primary aim is not a set of beliefs but the engagement with practices that enhance well-being.
- **all about stress reduction**
Mindfulness can significantly reduce stress but it's not about stress reduction. Rather than remove stress, mindfulness helps us learn to relate to stress differently.
- **a disciplinary tactic**
While mindfulness can help student behavior and school and classroom climate, it will backfire if used punitively or with the aim of controlling student compliance.
- **a silver bullet for all problems**
As we all know, there is no silver bullet. But, in a world that's increasingly fast-paced, where kids are bombarded with media and screens, where they have less and less downtime to just be, these practices can teach kids essential skills.
- **only calmness and happiness**
While over time practitioners generally experience more calmness and happiness, mindfulness is about being with whatever is happening, even if that is the opposite of calm and happy.
- **the absence of thought**
It's not about clearing the mind! Mindfulness gives us the ability to be aware of our thoughts, and direct our attention, and thus not be so controlled by runaway thoughts. We learn the skill of becoming aware of our thoughts, without necessarily doing anything with them.
- **about being complacent**
Acceptance does not mean agreement or complacency. It means acknowledging whatever's going on, which is a good idea because it's already happening.
- **just about meditation**
Meditation is an exercise that helps us strengthen our mindfulness practice the way physical exercise strengthens our muscles. The more we practice meditation, the more we deepen our capacities to be aware and compassionate, in other words, our mindfulness practice.

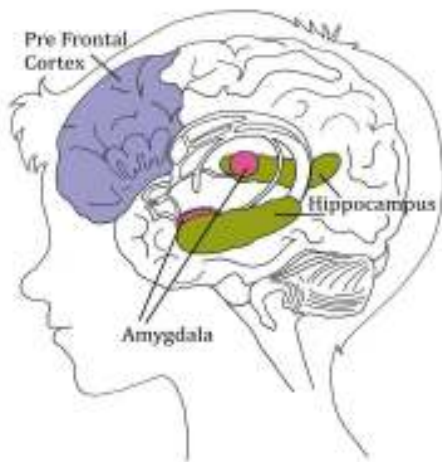
*prepared by julie@mindbodyalign.com
Adapted from various sources

The Research on Social-Emotional Education/Mindfulness

This page summarizes research on the benefits of social-emotional education and mindfulness, including neuroscience, the latest scientific studies, and specific benefits particularly relevant to educators and students. *Scholarly research finds that social-emotional education and mindfulness practice decreases stress and anxiety, increases attention, improves interpersonal relationships, strengthens compassion, and confers a host of other benefits.* (adapted from Mindful Schools)

<p style="text-align: center;">Attention</p> <p>Numerous studies show improved attention, including better performance on objective tasks that measure attention. Social-emotional/mindfulness practice teaches students how to pay attention in a particular way, and on purpose.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Emotion Regulation</p> <p>Social-emotional/mindfulness training is associated with emotion regulation across a number of studies. Social-emotional/ mindfulness education creates changes in the brain that correspond to less reactivity, and better ability to engage in tasks even when emotions are activated.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Compassion</p> <p>People randomly assigned to social-emotional/mindfulness training are more likely to help someone in need and have greater self-compassion.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Calming</p> <p>Studies find that social-emotional/mindfulness training reduces feelings of stress and improves anxiety and distress when placed in a stressful social situation.</p>

Social-Emotional Education Changes the Brain



Amygdala

Aroused when detecting and reacting to emotions, especially difficult or strong emotions such as fear. This part of the brain is less activated and has less gray matter density following social-emotional training.

Hippocampus

Critical to learning and memory, and helps regulate the amygdala. This part of the brain is more active and has more gray matter density following social-emotional training.

Prefrontal Cortex

The part of the brain most associated with maturity, including regulating emotions and behaviors and making wise decisions. This part of the brain is more activated following social-emotional training.

Evidence Of The Benefits Of Social Emotional Learning/Mindfulness In Education

Social Emotional Training with Teachers

When teachers learn social-emotional training/mindfulness, they not only reap personal benefits such as reduced stress and burnout, but their schools do as well. In randomized controlled trials, teachers who learned social-emotional and mindfulness training reported greater efficacy in doing their jobs and had more emotionally supportive classrooms and better classroom organization based on independent observations.

Social Emotional Training with Students

Studies find that youth benefit from learning social-emotional and mindfulness training in terms of improved cognitive outcomes, social-emotional skills, and well being. In turn, such benefits may lead to long-term improvements in life. For example, social skills in kindergarten predict improved education, employment, crime, substance abuse and mental health outcomes in adulthood.



- Cognitive Outcomes
- Attention and Focus
- Grades
- Improved memory
- Improved executive functioning skills



- Social-emotional skills
- Emotion regulation
- Behavior in school
- Empathy and perspective-taking
- Social-skills

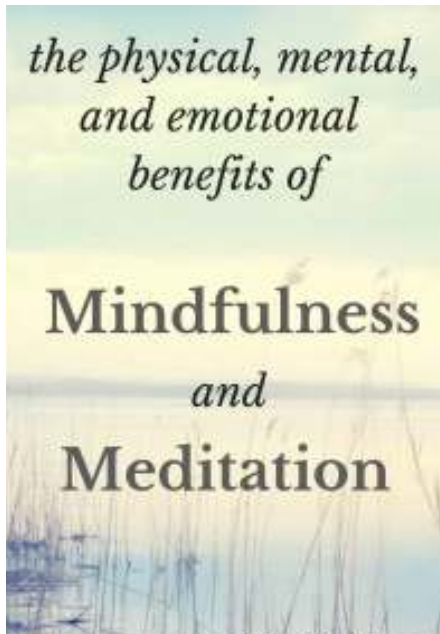


- Well Being
- Test anxiety
- Stress
- Posttraumatic symptoms
- Depression

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*Adapted from Mindful Schools

THE PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION



You're hearing about mindfulness everywhere, right?

That's because there are amazing benefits to mindfulness and meditation!

Much of the research on mindfulness and meditation reveals the amazing *neuroplasticity* of our brains — while we used to think that our brains stopped developing in our early twenties, we now know that our experiences can shape our neural development well into our sixties and beyond. The more we exercise a particular neural pathway in the brain, the more we strengthen it. In the cute phrase neuroscientists use, “Neurons that *fire* together, *wire* together.”

For example, a study of London cab drivers revealed that they had larger-than-average hippocampuses. The hippocampus plays an important role in memory — and the researchers concluded that all of the spatial memories the cabbies created while driving through one of the world's largest cities actually *increased the area in their brains devoted to making new memories*.

Recent studies indicate that as little as *12 minutes of meditation a day*, over an 8-week period, is enough to create changes in the brain! Read on for a summary of some of the most amazing findings in meditation research:



Physical Benefits

- Meditation practice has been demonstrated to increase immune function — in one study, people who meditated produced more antibodies to a flu vaccine than people who didn't meditate (which makes me excited because I just got a flu shot yesterday!)
- Meditation is also linked to an increase in telomerase (at the end of our genes), which can possibly reduce cell damage in the body.
- Mindfulness, including eating mindfully, has been linked to

weight loss.

- In one study, participants who practiced meditation lowered their blood pressure and cut their heart attack risk in half over five years.
- Meditation reduces levels of the hormone cortisol (which raises blood pressure and levels of stress).
- Taking a few deep breaths engages our parasympathetic nervous system (our “rest and digest” mode), and deactivates our sympathetic nervous system (our “fight, flight, or freeze” mode).

Mental Benefits

- Meditation increases neural connections in the brain, and has been shown to strengthen myelin (the protective sheath on our neurons that facilitates signaling in the brain).
- Meditation is linked to having a longer attention span and improves concentration.

- Meditation increases activity in the prefrontal cortex (associated with planning and judgment) and in the anterior cingulate (associated with emotional regulation, learning, and memory).
- In one study, participants who meditated for 30 minutes a day for 8 weeks had an increase in gray matter in the regions of the brain associated with memory, sense of self, and empathy.
- Students who meditated prior to an exam performed better than students who did not. The researchers linked meditation to improved cognitive functioning.

Emotional Benefits

- Mindfulness and meditation practices have been extensively linked to easing symptoms of depression and anxiety, and these techniques are used in many therapy settings.
- A 2007 study of students who had been taught meditation techniques revealed a decrease in test anxiety, nervousness, and self-doubt, and an increase in focus and concentration. Further studies have shown reduced absenteeism and suspensions in schools where mindfulness programs have been implemented.
- Mindfulness and meditation helps us learn to turn off the negative self-talk or rumination that our minds often resort to when left on their own.
- Meditation reduces our emotional reactivity. One study found that mindful stress reduction practices actually decreased the size of people's amygdala (responsible for our aggression, anxiety, and fear — an overactive amygdala is associated with depression).
- These practices can make us more compassionate. People who meditate show more activation in the area of the brain associated with empathy when they are exposed to someone who is suffering.

The Anecdotal Evidence

This information is impressive, but is also very clinical. I want to end with some personal stories about the benefits of mindfulness and meditation.

I love this post from Michelle Noehren of CTWorkingMoms, *What I Know About Motherhood Now That I Practice Meditation*. Michelle writes, "I've experienced a dramatic drop in my anxiety level and I feel like I've healed some relationships in my life that were difficult, not because the other person changed anything, but because I now fully understand that I have the ability to change situations solely based upon the way I think."

I have shared with you my experiences with postpartum depression and anxiety. In addition to seeking professional help, I have greatly benefited from practicing mindfulness and meditation. I am a lot calmer than I used to be in dealing with my children, often responding with compassion and a hug, rather than reacting with anger. Practicing mindfulness has indeed made me a better parent.

It has also helped me in overcoming my depression. The first time I read about rumination {the negative self-talk often associated with depression} I was shocked to see it listed as a symptom of depression. I thought everyone did that! If we had a bad morning getting ready for school, my 20-minute drive to work was filled with thoughts of what a terrible mother I was, worrying my life would never feel normal again with these two little children to take care of, and anticipating the continuation of the drama when picking them up after work and then starting over with mama-stress and dinner-time battles.... By the time I got to work I was emotionally exhausted, and found little joy in being a teacher or a mother.

Mindfulness and meditation have made me so much more aware of my thoughts, and how I can stop my mind from dwelling on the negative. I now realize my thoughts are just the stories I tell myself *about* my life, they are

not my life itself. The emotions come and go, and I don't need to waste my energy indulging anger, worry, or frustration. Mindfulness allows me to find the skillful response instead of jumping to an emotional reaction. I pay attention to the present moment and become aware of the good that's always there, waiting to be seen.

As I have begun sharing this practice with colleagues, teachers, and students, many people have thanked me for teaching mindfulness. A common theme has emerged in all of the stories I hear from people who have discovered these techniques — almost always, they will say, “Mindfulness changed my life.”

I know it has changed my life. And that's why I want to share it with all of you.



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*with permission from leftbrainbuddha.com

Integrating Mindfulness & Social Emotional Learning

Mindfulness Practices, Skills & Outcomes

As mindfulness is relatively new to education, many educators want more clarity about how mindfulness fits in with social and emotional learning (SEL). Many educators wonder if they should be choosing one approach instead of the other, or using both approaches.

Here, we analyze the similarities and differences between mindfulness and SEL. We'll show how the two are different and complementary, and describe how integrating mindfulness will increase the effects of existing SEL programs.

First, let's describe the practices, skills, and targeted outcomes of mindfulness and SEL.

The practices of mindfulness include:

- Explicit training of attention. For example, students learn to focus on the breath or sounds.
- Developing emotionally positive states including kindness, compassion, and gratitude. Exercises help students deeply feel the positive emotions.
- Training in regulating our responses to impulses. Mindfulness is a practice of developing an ability to let go of reactivity and act from a place of greater ease, stability, and wisdom, rather than compulsively pursuing our preferences.
- Psychoeducation, which includes information that normalizes the experience of students and enhances understanding of their internal life and behavior.

Mindfulness Skills

The practices and psychoeducation of mindfulness are hypothesized to develop specific skills. In one prominent model of mindfulness, Michael Posner and colleagues suggested three core skill sets: emotion regulation, attentional control, and self-awareness.



Mindfulness Outcomes

What are the aims of mindfulness and what are its benefits? As a practice and approach to living, mindfulness aims at profound flourishing. Practiced over a period of years, mindfulness seeks to create an emotionally balanced, meaningful life, animated by a spirit of compassion and caring.

Among youth, outcomes of interest include stress management, emotional well-being, and cognitive performance. While preliminary, some studies with youth find improvements in these areas.

Now, let us consider the practices, skills and outcomes of SEL.

SEL Practices, Skills & Outcomes

The practices of SEL include:

While SEL programs take diverse approaches, we try to synthesize common features here:

- Psychoeducation and exercises designed to enhance goal-directed behavior.
- Reinforce attitudes of mutual respect and commitment to building a supportive group.
- Learn emotion recognition and regulation.
- Provides tools for resolving differences by developing greater emotional intelligence and communication skills. For example, the practices of perspective-taking aim to develop empathic connection and prosocial behavior.
- Tools and psychoeducation regarding decision-making attempt to minimize impulsivity and reduce destructive behaviors including truancy, substance use and conduct problems.

SEL Skills

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the leading organization in disseminating SEL programming, highlights five core SEL skills, illustrated in the diagram below.

The skills in red (self-management and self-awareness) are skills practiced internally, those in blue (social awareness and relationship skills) are interpersonal, while responsible decision-making is in green to denote that it is practiced both internally and interpersonally.



SEL Outcomes

In an important review of more than 270,000 students receiving SEL programming, researchers highlighted five key outcomes of SEL programs:

- ~Healthy attitudes
- ~Positive social behavior
- ~Reduced emotional distress
- ~Improved academic performance
- ~Reduced conduct problems including substance use

The researchers found that universal SEL programs, delivered by classroom teachers, demonstrated benefits in all five key outcomes.

These benefits were considered small but meaningful. Of special interest, academic performance was improved by 11% - which is larger than the average effect of a typical academic-focused intervention.

Differences Between Mindfulness & SEL

There is some overlap between the practices, skills, and outcomes targeted by mindfulness versus SEL programs. We should bear in mind that many mindfulness programs include or explicitly incorporate aspects of SEL, and SEL programs sometimes involve small doses of training in mindfulness practices.

Differences in practices: The practices of SEL rely more heavily on psychoeducation and interpersonal skill development. Although mindfulness may include some similar exercises, mindfulness functions more centrally as an attentional training. As such, mindfulness more closely resembles training such as physical exercise. In

mindfulness practice – as in exercise – there is less emphasis on cognitive understanding, and more emphasis on engaging the attention in particular ways.

Differences in targeted skills: While the skills of the approaches have considerable overlap, SEL more explicitly focuses on creating harmonious classrooms and communities. Mindfulness invests heavily in developing self-regulation. A focus on self-regulation directly supports the first two SEL skills – self-awareness and self-management. SEL emphasizes interpersonal and decision-making skills. When students self-regulate more effectively due to mindfulness, we expect their relationships to improve. However, mindfulness does not directly target relationship skills in the manner SEL does.

Differences in targeted outcomes: Inspecting the target outcomes of mindfulness and SEL, again, we find overlap and notable differences. Mindfulness is often less explicitly goal-oriented. Of course, in order to conduct research and introduce mindfulness in education, mindfulness programs need to specify targeted outcomes. Nevertheless, explicit emphasis on particular desired outcomes can undermine the unpressured, investigatory spirit of the practice. SEL more clearly specifies the desired outcomes: prosocial behavior, emotion regulation and academic performance. SEL is also more likely to specify long-term outcomes regarding success in adulthood.

What value does mindfulness add?

By targeting the three key skills of attentional control, self-awareness, and emotion regulation, mindfulness builds student self-regulation to a greater extent than social emotional programs alone. In turn, self-regulation allows students to think clearly enough to choose a strategy they learned in their social and emotional learning curriculum.

Here is an example of how mindfulness can support more positive behavior and allow students to use SEL strategies. Suppose Sally tells Billy he is a big jerk. The self-awareness piece of mindfulness training allows Billy to stop and notice that he feels angry and hurt. He might decide to bring his attention first to sensations in his body, and then taking some slow breaths, and in this way regulate his emotions. He might then decide to use a strategy he learned in SEL, such as using words to describe what he's feeling and make a request. For example, he might say, "Sally, I felt hurt and angry when I heard you call me a jerk. Could you please explain what made you say that?"

Secondly, the attention training aspect of mindfulness is likely to be relevant for academic achievement and learning SEL skills. Mindfulness decreases mind-wandering, which is associated with poorer task performance. Experimental evidence suggests that enhanced attention can improve reading comprehension and improves cognitive capacities.

Lastly, mindfulness may be beneficial in promoting the prosocial attitudes and behavior that form the centerpiece of SEL. The classic description of empathy – 'to stand in some else's shoes' – presumes that we already know what it is like to stand in our own shoes. With striking clarity, mindfulness reveals what it's like to experience difficult as well as pleasant emotions. The intimacy of our encounter with ourselves provides a deeper basis for accurate empathy. Recent data support this hypothesis. Mindfulness and empathy are also linked through their shared relationship with stress. While mindfulness decreases stress, stress weakens empathy. The suite of practices including kindness, compassion, gratitude and joy can also promote prosocial behaviors.

Key Points

- Mindfulness and SEL support one another in a synergistic fashion.
- By targeting the three key skills of attentional control, self-awareness, and emotion regulation, mindfulness builds student self-regulation to a greater extent than social emotional programs alone. In turn, self-regulation allows students to think clearly enough to choose a strategy they learned in their social and emotional learning curriculum – in the heat of the moment.
- Mindfulness can support students in paying closer attention, enabling them to better learn academic content and SEL skills.
- Mindfulness can promote prosocial attitudes and behavior by fostering empathy, kindness, compassion, and gratitude.

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*Adapted from Mindful Schools



A Guide for Working with Resistance

Encountering ‘resistance’ and dealing with behavior issues is one of the most common challenges for educators. Regardless of the subject matter we are teaching, our mindfulness practice can be a great asset in learning how to handle these situations with skill, grace and integrity. This guide offers an overview of key things to consider when working with resistance. The specifics of how to implement these will vary based on the context within which you work and the age of the youth you are serving.

- I. Learn to See ‘Resistance’ as Information
- II. Handle your Internal State
- III. Engage the Resistance
- IV. Refine the Container
- V. Get Support
- VI. Further Resources

I. Learn to See ‘Resistance’ as Information

One of the greatest challenges to effectively working with resistance is our very interpretation of behavior as ‘resistance!’ In psychology, the concept of resistance describes a client’s direct or indirect opposition to changing behaviors, discussing experiences, or assenting to a clinician’s intervention. However, our view of a student’s actions as ‘resistance’ can inhibit our ability to connect with them, block access to positive intentions, and exacerbate our own internal distress or reactivity.

Instead, we can learn to understand such behaviors as valuable information about a child’s needs. We can see it as an attempt to communicate their inner experience, to self-regulate, and/or to exercise autonomy. This is especially true with adolescents, where differentiation and identity formation are key phases of their psychological development. This shift in our own thinking help us stay connected to intentions of curiosity and care, creating new possibilities for engaging.

II. Handle your Internal State

As educators, we care deeply about our work and want to support children and youth to do their best. It can be incredibly frustrating when one or more students seem to do everything they can to undermine our intentions or inhibit learning in the classroom. Our ability to respond effectively to such behavior issues is directly proportional to our capacity to manage our internal reactivity. Here are a few tips for handling reactivity:

- **Monitor Reactivity:** Mindfully track your inner experience and find balance in the moment. Take time outside of class as needed to investigate emotions: frustration, anger, disappointment, sadness, helplessness, insecurity. Imagine the worst case scenario to face your fears. What’s the worst that can happen? Once we acknowledge that, it has less power. The more you work through your feelings outside of class, the easier it will be to stay clear, grounded, and calm in class.
- **Check Your Assumptions:** Watch out for thoughts that assume we know what is happening for the child or that attribute malicious intentions to their behavior. We really can’t know what’s going on for them. Give them the benefit of the doubt. They may actually be taking in our care whether they show it or not.

- **Don't Take It Personally:** The more we take a situation personally, feeling threatened, judging ourselves, or seeking approval, the less likely we are to respond in an appropriate, creative, or skillful way. Remember that there are many factors in a student's life that have nothing to do with you.
- **Redefine Success:** Watch out for the belief that you have to save, rescue, or fix anyone, which tends to narrow your attention onto one or two students. Do your best to let go of your expectations about how mindfulness "should" go and focus on responding authentically to whatever comes up as you teach. Shift your definition of success from a particular outcome to the integrity of your intention and the quality of relationship you build with the kids.

III. Engage the Resistance

To "engage the resistance" means to work directly with the children or youth who are acting out. We try to find a way to redirect their energy, to meet the needs they are trying to meet by acting out, and/or to win them over. The level of conversation and strategy will vary depending on the age of the youth. Here are a few best practices:

- **Prioritize Connection:** Strengthen your ability to connect empathically and prioritize the quality of relationship. Ultimately, we can't get anyone to do anything, but how we engage often communicates more than what we say. Make space to offer empathy for their feelings to de-escalate any tension.
- **Seek to Understand their Needs:** Stretch to imagine the student(s)' concerns. Ask questions and really listen to what they say. Inquire, directly or indirectly, what matters for them. "What do you need right now?" can be a powerful question.
- **Problem Solve Together:** As you identify what's going on, have a conversation and brainstorm ways they can meet their needs that also honor you and the other students in the room. Communicate clearly your need to balance your care for them with your duty to protect everyone's right to learn.
- **Set Clear Limits and Boundaries:** Creating a simple structure or agreement for behavior etiquette helps students to know what we expect of them and why. Following through on the limits you set sends a clear message that you will respect everyone's right to learn. Be sure to make your requests clear, specific, and doable, and to share the reasons behind what you are asking them to do. This inherently acknowledges their autonomy and helps create buy-in. If and when you need to use your power to enforce limits (e.g., asking a student to leave), be sure to frame it in terms of your needs (e.g., wanting everyone to learn) rather than 'right' and 'wrong,' which can undercut a student's sense of self-worth.
- **Find Other Creative Strategies:** Each student and each situation is different. Use your intuition and creativity to find other strategies.
 - Walk or sit near the student. Depending on the context, physical contact can be settling, provide comfort or attention in an unobtrusive way.
 - Give the student a special role to help them feel like they belong and are seen.
 - Name what's happening in the room and include it in the lesson.
- **Attend to Timing:** Choose which interventions to use in class, and when to find a neutral time to talk privately with the student(s) in question. (E.g., the middle of class not be the best time to have a full-on discussion with the student...)

IV. Refine the Container

Ideally, you've created a meaningful and supportive learning environment and set a clear and strong container from the beginning. If not, it can be difficult to go back and redefine the ground rules. However, with some care, skill and planning, it can be done. If appropriate, consider doing a "reset" with your class: discuss everyone's needs; create group agreements and norms; and work to reestablish a culture of respect.

With older youth, consider how much you've been able to create a sense of relevance. Find out what matters to them in their life, where they're struggling, or where you think mindfulness can help. When they can see the potential benefits of mindfulness, they will take it more seriously. Until we do this, teaching mindfulness can be an uphill battle. Use a "hook" to draw them in and make mindfulness relevant to their lives. Revisit the question of relevance every lesson, varying and building on the hook, reinforcing it until there is a palpable and lasting shift in the tone of the room. For more on this, see "Using Metaphors to Teach Mindfulness."

V. Get Support

While you may be the only person standing up in front of the classroom, you're not alone. Turn to friends and colleagues for support. Seek consultation from peers or mentors. If there are other adults present or available (an aid, a student teacher), ask for their help in implementing the strategies you choose. Try obtaining one on one support for the student, which can be very effective in addressing behavior issues.

You can also be creative and enlist the support of other students. Use the behavior issue as a teachable moment and involve the whole class in an honest conversation about learning and collaboration. What do the other students need to be able to learn? Do they have ideas about how to work together to address the situation? Privately, speak with one or two students who are leaders in the class and invite their input. Encourage them to speak up or help set behavior norms.

VI. Further Resources

Need more support with student behavior? Look it up on the web!

Email me and I will send you some of the information I received in training.

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Ways of Sustaining Classroom Mindfulness

The most effective way to use mindfulness to create long-lasting changes in your classroom and the lives of your students is to integrate and sustain the practice in your daily routine. Here are some best practices and tips for how to do that.

1. Start Early

The best way to help mindfulness take root is to begin integrating supplementary practices early on. Start using mindful moments and transitions within the first week, and begin student-led practice within the first month.

2. Create Mindful Moments and Transitions

Mindfulness Lessons provide three key benefits: a) specific guidance and instruction; b) dedicated periods of mental training; and c) space to discuss and explore students' inner experience. These periods of focused training are reinforced and enhanced by incorporating short moments of mindfulness during the day.

Choose specific times when you invite students to take a mindful pause, listen to the sound of the bell, or practice mindful breathing. It's helpful to do this at the same time each day: before morning meeting, after recess, before reading, etc. These moments of practice remind students that they have a tool to self-regulate and focus; strengthen their mindfulness practice; and support a cohesive structure in your classroom.

3. Encourage Student-led Practice

Once you've covered the basics and students are able to practice quietly for one minute, start inviting your kids to lead mindfulness practice. This empowers students, helps to create a sense of ownership, and lays a foundation for the practice to continue beyond your class. You can begin by inviting a student to lead the practice at the beginning of each lesson. Then, create a rotating schedule for daily practice, or make leading mindfulness a special privilege.

4. Deepen and Extend the Practice

Once students have had some time learning mindfulness, give them the opportunity to deepen the practice in several key ways. The first is challenging your students to practice seated mindfulness for longer periods of time. Instead of always leading a new lesson, gradually increase the amount of silent practice with your students.

5. Age Appropriate Discussion

You can also deepen the practice by engaging students in more discussion and exploration of their inner experience. Devote at least one lesson per week to open conversation about mindfulness practice and how it relates to their lives. This is particularly important with adolescents. You may need to seed questions to get the conversation started. Here are a few suggestions:

- Has anyone found a new way to apply mindfulness here at school or at home?
- What's going well for you that mindfulness could enhance or allow you to enjoy more?
- What's happening in your life that's challenging? (Explore the issues; invite discussion about how mindfulness could help).

6. Get Creative: New Lessons, Art Projects, and More

It's also important to continue to build relevance and keep things interesting for your students. Get creative by incorporating current events, seasonal holidays, school spirit, arts and culture into new mindfulness lessons. Invite your students to create their own mindfulness lessons. Do art or writing projects with mindfulness- or heartfulness-based themes.

7. Review the Basics

It's important to periodically review the basics. As you know from your own practice, we can do mindful breathing (or any other core technique) for years and still learn new things! Many teachers find it useful to repeat key lessons with their class. See if you can instill a spirit of curiosity and investigation in your students

8. Set up Mentors or Peer Buddies for New Students

Most classrooms have one or more new students join during the year; or perhaps your program has a regular turn-over rate in the student population. One way of approaching this is to invite current students to serve as "Mindfulness Mentors." Pair up each new student with a peer buddy or mentor, who can explain the basics and answer questions.

9. Continue Your Own Practice and Connect with Peers

Last but not least, the more you deepen your own practice, the more wisdom, inspiration, and embodied mindful presence you will have to share with your class. In addition to your own formal mindfulness practice, be sure to take time to connect with peers online or in person. An in-person monthly or bi-monthly gathering to discuss practicing and teaching mindfulness can be of great benefit.

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*Adapted from Mindful Schools



Secularity Guidelines

As educators sharing mindfulness, it is first important to clarify and affirm our intentions. When we share mindfulness, we are not attempting to impose a comprehensive belief system. Nor are we attempting to advance or inhibit any religious commitments that students or educators may hold. **Our objective is simple: to support the well-being of students and educators by sharing simple practices, and to develop an attitude of inquiry around how the mind works.**

In this spirit, we wanted to offer some recommendations to support secular teaching:

1. Mindfulness practices should be articulated in the primary instructional language or languages (in the case of bilingual education).
2. No classroom can be conducted in a completely value-neutral manner and it is reasonable to affirm humanistic values such as kindness, cooperation, empathy or concentration. However, mindfulness is not an attempt to teach a comprehensive ethical system.
3. Teach the practices in a direct, experiential manner whereby practitioners can examine the validity of the claims within their own subjective experience (e.g. when doing seated mindfulness practice, students can directly perceive the attention wandering away from the mindfulness anchor). The spirit is one of encouraging curiosity as if conducting an experiment with one's own mind and body.
4. Do not assert or intimate claims about metaphysics (e.g. 'the nature of the universe is love'). If such questions or comments arise from students, support their curiosity while clarifying the scope of mindfulness practice and redirect the conversation to the subjective or empirical realm.
5. Frame mindfulness as a practice about subjective experiences rather than about overarching truths of the universe.
6. Do not include symbols or artifacts closely linked to a particular religious tradition (e.g. making particular gestures with one's hands, bowing, using religious props, etc.).
7. Do not substantiate the practices on the basis of religious figures or texts. At the same time, take care not to denigrate religious practices or texts.

8. Teach in a manner consistent with current scientific understandings of human biology and behavior.

We hope these guidelines support you in your teaching. We are sincerely grateful for all the work you do and trust that your efforts will bring benefits to many. For having conversations about the secular nature of mindfulness, please take a look at [Conversations on Secularity](#).

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*Adapted from Mindful Schools



Conversations on Secularity: Recommendations for how to address concerns of parents, administrators or others about the secularity of your mindfulness teaching.

As mindfulness gains an increasingly prominent place within society, occasional concerns have been raised about its secularity.

Yet even when adhering to all of our Secularity Guidelines, you still may encounter parents, administrators or others who are concerned about the secularity of your mindfulness teaching. We'd like to offer some thoughts on how to address these concerns.

First, it is important to understand the nature of the objection. There are two common types of objections to mindfulness in relation to secularity. The first objection holds that education should be rigorously aligned with science and opposes anything appearing remotely religious within schools. While we fully agree that public education must not be entangled with religion, we disagree that mindfulness is inherently religious.

The second type of objection asserts that mindfulness infringes on people's rights to practice their own religion. We find no aspect of mindfulness that attempts to interfere with personal religious beliefs and practices. In fact, the training of the attention involved in mindfulness practice can even be beneficial for people whose religious tradition includes, for example, prayer.

These two types of concerns may require different approaches to resolving the differences. If the individual is willing to meet, and you feel comfortable doing so, it may be productive to have a direct conversation. In having the conversation, remember that listening with a genuine intention to understand the other person, with openness and respect will help to create the best conditions for a meaningful conversation.

Your ability to identify the specific nature of their concern(s) will inform how you respond and what, if any, information you offer to try to address the issue. Here are three points that may be helpful in your conversations with parents or colleagues.

1. Share your intention behind teaching mindfulness practice: you truly wish to benefit children. It may be helpful to emphasize the simplicity of this intention. You are not attempting to instill a comprehensive belief system or 'convert' anyone to anything. Instead, you are teaching practices that develop children's capacities for focusing attention, regulating emotions and kindness, for the purposes of well-being and success in school and life. You might describe specific aspects of the practice and explain how they benefit students. For example, you can note that mindfulness is considered an attentional training. As they practice, the students are developing the skill of sustaining attention even in the face of distractions. Attentional skills are vital in the academic environment.

2. It is also helpful to document the responses of the students. You might share anecdotal feedback from the children. The response from youth is typically very positive, and their feedback can dispel concerns that they feel religious pressure.
3. Sharing research may also be useful. A substantial body of scientific research has documented the value of mindfulness. This research has been published in scientific journals that adhere carefully to empirical standards. We have provided a [research overview](#) that makes a clear scientific case for mindfulness.

In the event that the individual remains uncomfortable with mindfulness instruction, we encourage you to offer the possibility of having their child opt out of mindfulness sessions.

We hope that these suggestions support you to navigate the terrain of secularity and deliver mindfulness in a way that is effective and inclusive.

*prepared by julie@mindbodyalign.com

*Adapted from Mindful Schools



Resources for Mindful Education for Teachers

Mindfulness Practices (find online meditations with a web search)

- **Guided meditation: mindful breathing**
- **Guided meditation: body scan**
- **Guided meditation: sending kind thoughts** (*To ourselves and others.*)
- **Pause and breathe** (*Pause when you notice stress arising. Take one mindful breath.*)

Books for Children

- Charlotte and the Quiet Place by Deborah Sosin
- Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda by Lauren Alderfer
- My Five Senses by Alike
- Take the Time: Mindfulness for Kids by Maud Roegiers
- Visiting Feelings by Lauren Rubenstein
- Moody Cow Meditates by Kerry Lee MacLean
- Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children by Thich Nhat Hanh
- What Does it Mean to be Present? by Rana DiOrio
- Rosie's Brain by Linda Ryden
- A Handful of Quiet by Thich Nhat Han
- Puppy Mind by Andrew Jordan Nance

Books for Teachers & Parents

- Building Emotional Intelligence by Linda Lantieri
- Child's Mind by Christopher Willard
- Sitting Still Like A Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (And Their Parents) by Eline Snel
- The Mindful Child & Mindful Games by Susan Kaiser Greenland
- The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students by Daniel Rechtschaffen
- Trauma-Proofing Your Kids by Peter Levine and Maggie Kline
- Whole Brain Child by Dan Siegel
- Teach, Breathe, Learn by Meena Srinivasan
- Everybody Present by Nikolaj Flor Rotne, Didde Flor Rotne

Articles (find with a web search of the title)

- *The Power of Mindfulness: How a meditation practice can help kids become less anxious, more focused*, Child Mind Institute
- *Mindfulness in the Classroom: Five Skills That Influence Your Ability to Work With All Kinds of Learners*, Education World
- *Can Mindfulness Make Us Better Teachers?*, Huffington Post
- *In the Classroom, A New Focus on Quieting the Mind*, New York Times
- *How to Help a Traumatized Child in the Classroom*, Greater Good Science Center
- *The Science of Trauma, Mindfulness, and PTSD*, Mindful
- *Why Teachers Say Practicing Mindfulness Is Transforming The Work*, MindShift
- *Low-Income Schools See Big Benefits in Teaching Mindfulness*, MindShift
- *How Schools Use Brain Science To Help Traumatized Kids Heal and Learn*, MindShift

Apps

- Align Mindfulness
- Insight Timer
- Stop, Breath, Think
- Calm
- 10% Happier
- Meditation Studio
- Smiling Mind
- Take a Break
- Take a Chill

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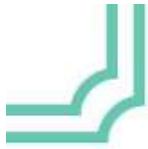
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Julie Braumberger
JULIE BRAUMBERGER
Director of Wellness
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